

LETTER

TO

S. C. M. a Member of Parliament,

FROM AN

Inhabitant of the Island of

BARBADOES.

TH O I have not the Honour of being personally acquainted with you, yet I am no Stranger to your Character: your great Capacity and fervent Zeal to advance the Interest of *England*, has appeared upon many seasonable Opportunities; and it's that which has encouraged me to make Application to you, in behalf of the Island of *Barbadoes*. I knew to do good to any set of People under the *English* Government is a sufficient Motive to animate you, without any other Consideration; But in this Case the Interest of *England* is highly concerned, for it's well known to all People, who have made any Inquiry into the Trade of *England*, and the *English* Constitution, how beneficial the Sugar Colonies, and especially *Barbadoes* which is

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the Key to all the rest, have been to the Kingdom of *England*: the great Number of Ships that have been yearly employed, by which means many stout Sailors have been bred; the vast Export of the Manufactory, which gives Employment to many Thousands of Families in this Nation that would otherwise lie idle, is an undeniable Proof of the great Advantage the Sugar Colonies are to this Nation.

Now Sir, that which I would offer to your Consideration, is, That this Island is fallen to great Decay, and must dwindle to nothing, if not prevented by the Wisdom of this Government; and this will not only be destructive to the Inhabitants there, but will prove of bad Consequence to *England*.

The Imposition laid in the late King's time, gave the first Stroke to that Island; and since that the Soil is become so poor, that it requires very great Charge and Labour to improve it; especially seeing the Seasons of late Years are so uncertain, that there is not near one half the Sugar made now that used to be made 18 or 20 Years ago, and the Island sensibly decreases yearly in that Manufactory.

But that which threatens *Barbadoes* extremely, is the Male Administration of the Government there. The Governor of that Island has the Disposal of all Offices both Civil and Military, a few Patent Places excepted; and even these are subjected to great uneasiness, if they do not comply with his Terms, and some of them have been rendered ineffectual, notwithstanding the Grants were immediately from the King.

And that which is of worse Consequence, the Governor is or may be either the primary or ultimate Judge in all Cases that relate either to Life or Property. He is Captain General and Vice Admiral, Chancellor, chief Judge of the Court of Errors, chief Judge of the Court of Grievances, and Ordinary of the Island, chief Judge of the Court of Grand Sessions, by which means the Inhabitants find them-

themselves obliged to run to him with Gifts, especially such as have Causes, or suspect they may have Causes depending before him; and the Governors that have been hitherto sent, have chiefly aimed at making their Fortunes, so that they seldom refuse what is given to them: and this throws the People into endless Suits, and encourages Debtors and many ill-designing People to go to Law, expecting good Success from the great Presents they generally never fail to make.

But there is another Mischief, which is paramount to all these already named; and that is, by this great Power lodged in the Governor, he is enabled to influence in the choice of the Assembly, which is the Representatives of the People chosen two out of every Parish Annually, who in conjunction with the Governor and Council have a Power from the King to make Laws, raise Money, and the like. Now the Money Bills arise first in this Assembly, and if the Governor has so great Power in the choice of them, then he can never fail to accomplish his Ends; which plainly appears if it is considered, that in little more than three Years a late Governor has had presented by the Assembly near ten thousand Pounds.

These great Gifts are so far from being an Indication of the Riches of the Inhabitants, that they are rather Marks of their Slavery; and I hope no body will have the Assurance to deny this, if it is proved, that at the same time the last 2000*l.* was presented to the Governor, there was a Proposition to lay a Tax upon the Inhabitants to raise one thousand Pounds for the Support of many poor Families, that were dying and going off the Island for want of Food, this last Motion was disregarded, but the Present to the Governor past with very little Contradiction.

The King gives the Governor a very good Salary, the Perquisites of the Government are considerable, the Inhabitants have lately found a way to bear the Charges of his living; and yet all this is not thought sufficient: But the People

le must be either cajol'd, frightened, or both, into these great annual Presents; and at such times when the Inhabitants are in a starving Condition: And it is not thought enough to precipitate into this unparallel'd Slavery more and more every Year, but they are brought over to make Publick Justification of their Actions, by giving General Applauses and Encomiums of their Governors, tho such be even against matter of Fact and Record, when they should be spending their Time in the more necessary and essential Affairs of the Island, which are generally neglected.

However tho it may be necessary to restrain an unthinking People from exceeding in those annual Gifts, yet the limiting so as that they may have nothing left in their Power to oblige a Governor may be prejudicial; but then the proper Care will be to keep them within Bounds.

There are many Instances may be given, more than have been named, of the Corruption of Governors, which will appear if examined into; therefore I forbear to take up your Time in mentioning them here.

Sir, I lay these things before you, that as they are all certain Truths, and upon Enquiry will be found so, you will be pleased to give your helping Hand for the Removal of such Grievances, when they come to be complained of in a proper Place. For as the People in the Plantations are because of the Distance and great Charge discouraged from appealing to the Government here; and indeed none can appear for less than 500 *l*. So the Complaints that have been made have met with little Success, it being shrewdly suspected some Great Men here share with the Governors in their Depredations, that they may be the better supported in their unjust Administrations there. And it seems very unaccountable that the Plantations should continue so long neglected, especially seeing they are as it were under the Guardianship of an Establishment, the Members whereof are sufficiently paid for such purpose. But I wish the question may not be properly

properly put whether the Honourable Members of that Body have hitherto taken care to qualify themselves, to understand the Constitution of the Colonies, and whether they have yet made any one Advance towards the Promotion of the Plantation-Trade, and whether the Money bestow'd on them might not be better laid out on the Plantations or otherwise, unless they give better Proofs hereafter both of their Care and Understanding.

It's true it may be alledged, that there will be both great Hazard and Difficulty in subverting or altering a Constitution that has been of so long standing in the Island: And if this upon Consideration should be found so, yet I hope no body will deny but that it's most consistent with Reason and Justice, that seeing so great Power is lodged in Governors, that such as shall be sent hereafter ought to be Men of pure Hearts, clear Heads, and clean Hands, experienc'd in Business, and Men of Interest, who, as they'll scorn to pervert or delay Justice, so they will be under no necessity of squeezing the People.

There is another thing that is very Essential to the Preservation of this considerable Island, that I cannot omit offering to your serious Consideration, which is putting of it in a suitable Posture of Defence, if a War should break out. I do not think it convenient to say any thing here of the State of it at present, seeing that may be easily known when examin'd: But this I may affirm, That, morally speaking, if 120000 or 140000 *l.* were laid out upon well-contrived Fortifications, with a few well-disciplin'd Regular Troops, no Prince in *Europe* could have hopes to attack that Island with Success, even with a Force of 10000 men; and such a Force I hope no body will suppose can be transported so many Leagues.

This then would not only render *Barbadoes* impregnable, but would be a great Security for the rest of the Sugar Islands, which otherwise may be in great danger; and if the Plantation-Trade

Trade should be lost, especially if a War happens, which will shut up a great deal of our other Traffick, I appeal to all thinking Men how many *English* Ships would lie by the Walls, and how many People in *London*, and other Cities of *England*, would blow their Fingers, to say no worse of it, for want of Employ. It must then be manifest Imprudence not to look forward, or to run such a Risque, as for the want of laying out 140000 *l.* to put even this Island to any hazard, which pays the Crown near 40000 *l.* and imports about 400000 *l.* into the Kingdom *per Ann.* which is so much Treasure laid up in the Nation, unless so much of it which is yearly exported in Manufactures, which is still a greater Advantage.

But if it be objected, That the Nation is at great Charge in sending Ships in time of War, &c. and that the Inhabitants ought to be at the Expence of fortifying the Place themselves: I have two very clear and plain Answers ready. In the first place, the People of *Barbadoes* are in no sort of Capacity of raising such a Fund as will be required for such purpose: For tho three or four Men have been fortunate in Trade and otherwise, to get indifferent good Estates; yet I may affirm, That there are not twenty Men in that Island worth 700 *l.* Sterling *per Annum*, of which they pay more than one third annually to the Publick, in *England* and in the Island; and for the rest, many of them do not come near the aforesaid Value, and others are in a very low Condition. For this is the Misfortune of a *Barbadoes* Estate; it is so subject to Casualties, that one Year it may be worth 4 or 500 *l.* *per Annum*, and the Loss of Slaves, Fire, the Incertainty of the Seasons, &c. will reduce it next Year to less than 200 *l.* The next Answer is, That if the Inhabitants were capable to raise such a Fund, yet they are not under any sort of Security that it would be truly applied; and this Suggestion is grounded upon the following Instance. Above thirty Years ago, in the Reign of *K. Charles the Second*, the Island of
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Barbadoes, by a Law there, laid an Impost of 4 ÷ per Cent. upon all the Product of the Island for and towards the defraying the publick Charges of the Island, such as building and repairing the Fortifications, building a Prison, paying the yearly Expence of holding the Grand Sessions, as will appear by the Act. Now as soon as this Duty was laid on, Officers were appointed by the King to collect it, and it has ever since been paid in to such Officers, and has not been applied to the Uses in the Act.

It is said, that the Money arising from this Duty is amongst the Funds that are appointed for the Civil List by the Parliament. But when those Funds are examin'd, it will be found they were all raised by Act of Parliament, this only excepted. Then the Question naturally will be, How that Money comes there? The Answer is ready: It was Money raised by the Inhabitants of *Barbadoes* for their own Use; but has been ever since it was raised taken from them. Certainly this Answer would sound better in *Turkish* or *French* Language than in *English*; and that some other Fund ought to be in its place, will be found more agreeable to Justice: For it has been always esteemed in *England* a very great Injustice to misapply any Fund, and no doubt the same Liberty and Justice extends it self to the Colonies. The People of the Plantations have very calmly submitted to the Duties laid upon them by the Government here, tho they have no Representatives in Parliament, which is directly against the *English* Constitution.

But when they raise Money in the Colonies for their own Defence, and for their own Use; to have that transmitted from them to *England*, seems to be very hard, and altogether repugnant to the Freedom that every *Englishman* is born to.

And as the Governour then in being, when this Duty was laid, had his own particular Ends in the first Misapplication, so it's to be hoped, that the Continuance of it has been chiefly for

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for want of Enquiry, and that upon due Examination it will run in its proper Channel, that the People may have at least, that Money, to put themselves in some Posture of Defence which was first raised for that purpose; and if the Government here lay out the aforesaid Sum of 140000 £, it will be Money well laid out, and but refunding part of that Duty which has been paid by the Inhabitants of the Colonies in their own wrong for so many Years past, which England has no more Right to than a Stranger has to any Planter's Estate there.

Sir, your coming in with your Interest to save a People under such Hardships, and in danger upon so many Accounts, in which good Work all Impartial and Just Men will join with you, will carry its Reward with it, and will be very acceptable to all good Men, especially those concerned.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN a former Impression of this Sheet, there was a great Mistake committed, viz. in Page 6. line 29, where instead of 1000 £ per an. it must be only 700 £ per an. Those that have any of that Impression are desired to rectify it.

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